

**EM SSAB CHAIRS**  
**Bi-Monthly Conference Call**  
**Thursday, November 9, 2006**  
**3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Participants**

**Chairs/Representatives:**

Idaho	Richard Buxton, Shannon Brennan, Lisa Aldrich
Nevada	David Hermann, Carla Sanda, Walter Wegst
NNM	J. D. Campbell, Menice Santistevan
Oak Ridge	Spencer Gross, Pat Halsey, Lance Mezga, Norman Mulvenon, Pete Osborne
Paducah	William (Allen) Burnett, Eric Roberts, Mitch Hicks
Richland/Hanford	Susan Leckband, Shelly Cimon
Savannah River	Gerri Flemming

**DOE representatives:**

EM-13	Melissa Nielson, Doug Frost
EM-12	Doug Tonkay
EM-20	Mark Gilbertson
CI	Betty Nolan
LM	Melinda Downing

***OPENING REMARKS***

Melissa Nielson welcomed the participants and reiterated the invitation to the fourth annual Joint Intergovernmental Groups Meeting, which is scheduled to take place on November 29-30 in Arlington, VA. The meeting will include presentations on Project Management, Waste Disposition, Long-term Stewardship, Natural Resource Damages, and Budget, as well as a workshop on improving communication. She asked Doug Frost to send registration information to the Chairs.

***NEW BUSINESS***

**Environmental Justice**

Melinda Downing, from DOE's Office of Legacy Management, discussed the *State of Environmental Justice in America 2007* conference, which will be held in Washington, DC on March 29-30, 2007. Ms. Downing extended an invitation to the EM SSAB Chairs and members.

The Conference will address the following questions: What do we mean by environmental justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What progress have we made? Can environmental justice and economic development coexist? What remains to be done?

DOE's overall public participation strategy stresses developing community capacity for meaningful participation in relevant DOE decision-making processes while identifying new opportunities for collaboration. The Environmental Justice conference fulfills this strategy, and is of particular interest to the EM SSABs since the local Boards often work to improve relationships in the communities they represent.

Individuals are invited to submit abstracts by November 22. Selected papers will be published in a conference report and authors will be invited to present their work on one or more panels. The conference will also include a poster session and exhibits for those papers not featured on the panels.

For more information, Ms. Downing can be reached at 202-586-7703 or [melinda.downing@hq.doe.gov](mailto:melinda.downing@hq.doe.gov).

### **Congressional Update**

Betty Nolan from the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs reported that Congress will return on November 13 for one week, prior to adjourning for Thanksgiving. Extending the Continuing Resolution beyond November 17 is their top priority.

Congress will return again in early December for an unknown amount of time before the holidays. Ms. Nolan noted that the recent midterm elections will affect who EM interacts with in both the House and Senate next year.

It is unclear whether Congress will pass Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 appropriation bills or an omnibus bill in December, or allow EM to continue to operate under a continuing resolution into 2007.

### **Waste Disposition Strategies Update**

Doug Tonkay from the Office of Disposal Operations (EM-12) provided an update on the National Disposition Strategy for Low-Level and Mixed Low-Level Waste. EM-12 has solicited comments from various audiences, and anticipates revision one of the document will be finalized in the near future. The National Disposition Strategy will serve as a tool for EM-12 and remain a living document, subject to annual reviews and revisions.

Due to the significant interest in the National Disposition Strategy, Christine Gelles, Director of the Office of Disposal Operations, and Frank Marcinowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regulatory Compliance, will participate in a breakout session and presentation on waste disposition at the Intergovernmental Groups meeting. EM-12 will also discuss and demonstrate the Waste Information Management System (WIMS),

which includes early 2006 low-level waste (LLW), mixed low-level waste, and transuranic (TRU) waste data. The WIMS will be updated with new data in early 2007. Ultimately, WIMs will include forecast data collected from EM projects and related programs in order to provide a consistent, Department-wide planning base.

### **March 2007 Chairs' Meeting Agenda**

Mr. Frost stated that the EM SSAB Planning Committee will conduct its first conference call on November 15 to discuss the March meeting agenda. He asked participants to submit potential agenda topics to him beforehand by phone or email.

Ms. Nielson indicated that a substantial list of topics was already in the works, and proposed that, in addition, the Environmental Management Advisory Board (EMAB) Chair, Mr. James Ajello, make a brief presentation at the March meeting. Hanford Chair, Todd Martin, presented to EMAB at its last semiannual meeting, and Oak Ridge Chair, Lance Mezga, will follow suit at EMAB's March meeting in Oak Ridge. Participants agreed.

J. D. Campbell, the Northern New Mexico Chair, suggested that the Planning Committee consider a topic similar to the EMAB communications and outreach reports for the EM SSAB March agenda, and that perhaps Mr. Ajello could provide an update on his Board's related efforts.

Mr. Campbell asked for clarification on the EMAB recommendation review process.

Ms. Nielson clarified the EMAB recommendation review process by explaining that, similar to the EM SSAB recommendation review process, a lead is assigned the action of analyzing the recommendation and providing a response. The EMAB 2006 report contained 11 recommendations, and was assigned to action officer Chuen-Fu Wu, in the office of Chief Operating Officer Inés Triay. Ms. Nielson added that the process for the EMAB 2006 recommendations may take longer, as Mr. Wu will analyze the recommendations in light of the National Academy of Public Administration's EM review.

### **Technology Strategy**

EM Deputy Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Technology Mark Gilbertson (EM-20) provided an overview of his organization. EM-20 oversees the Office of Groundwater and Soil Remediation (EM-22), directed by Larry Bailey; the Office of Decontamination and Decommissioning (EM-23), directed by Sandra Waisley; and the Office of Waste Processing (EM-21), which is currently rotating directors.

EM-20 aims to reduce the program's technical risk through chartering external reviews, providing technical assistance to the Field, engaging in alternative projects, and promoting applied research. At one time, EM spent an estimated \$400 million annually on the research and development of new technologies; currently, the budget only allows

for \$20 million. While Assistant Secretary James Rispoli has requested additional funding, EM-20 has compensated for the reduction by reaching out to other programs and leveraging their investments in support of EM, such as the Office of Science's Environmental Remediation Research program and the Department of Homeland Security's radiation characterization technologies. EM-20 will continue to focus on technology integration, information transfer, and an increased emphasis on external reviews to ensure that EM is using the best engineering and best technical approaches available to address problems.

At the request of Congress, Mr. Gilbertson's office is focusing on the development of a road map for future technical risk reduction activities, and will participate in discussions with Congressional staff on November 13 to determine expectations for EM. In support of the road map, EM-20 hosted a workshop at the end of October to solicit input from the field offices and mined the EM SSAB recommendation database for technological advice – specifically relating to D&D, engineering, and soil and groundwater remediation. Mr. Gilbertson encouraged participants and their Boards to provide more advice on current technological concerns, and cited Hanford's double-shell tank integrity issues as an example. Furthermore, Mr. Gilbertson offered to share the products his staff created from the historical EM SSAB recommendations in support of the road map.

Shelly Cimon from Hanford asked Mr. Gilbertson if there would be a \$20 million increase in funding for the Columbia River groundwater treatability tests in the 100 area. The \$20 million would be in addition to the \$10.5 million the site received for FY06 and FY07.

Mr. Gilbertson indicated that there had been language to that effect; however, since EM is still operating under a continuing resolution, it is difficult to comment on the allocations of the final budget. He expressed that EM-20 shares the site's sentiments and would like to be on the ground and putting the money to work.

Lastly, according to Mr. Gilbertson, the National Academy of Science plans to conduct a workshop to review EM's high-priority technical issues, and recently issued reports that identified long-term needs. EM-20 will work with the Academy to reach out to external parties for advice, and has asked for assistance in maintaining critical infrastructure at EM's research laboratories.

## **SITE SUMMARIES**

### **Savannah River Site – Gerri Flemming**

The Savannah River Board's Chair, Karen Patterson, was unable to participate in the conference call. Gerri Flemming, the Federal Coordinator, spoke on Ms. Patterson's behalf.

- The Next Board meeting is scheduled for November 13-14.

- The Board plans to discuss the draft permit for the Salt Waste Processing Facility. DOE and the Department of Health and Environmental Control in South Carolina are working on an interim permit that would allow the facility to run and begin processing salt in early 2007.
- The recent cut in funding to the Savannah River Ecology Lab was unexpected and concerns the Board.
- The Board is optimistic that the high-level waste disposition processing plan will provide a baseline for future progress
- The Board will submit bylaw revisions to DOE Headquarters by the end of December.

#### **Paducah – Allen Burnett**

- Scrap metal from the Paducah site will be shipped off site after January 1, 2007.
- 18 facilities are scheduled for D&D. Eight facilities have been completed and two more are scheduled for completion in early FY07.
- DOE has submitted its groundwater assessment plans for the 3746 U Landfill to the State of Kentucky. The Board will review the plans.
- Reinhard Knerr is the new Deputy Designated Federal Officer; Mitch Hicks is the new Federal Coordinator; and Eric Roberts is the new Administrator.
- Rhonda Smith has resigned; Mr. Burnett has succeeded her as Board Chair.
- Recently, the Board held its annual retreat. Due to the new composition and relatively low level of experience, the Board and its staff are considering an orientation for members to educate them on their roles, responsibilities, and work scope.
- Presently, the Board consists of ten members. Mr. Burnett will discuss with Ms. Nielson the possibility of expeditiously appointing one new member.
- The Board will submit bylaw revisions to Headquarters by December 1.

#### **Oak Ridge – Lance Mezga**

- DOE reached a major milestone under the Accelerated Closure Plan by completing the clean-up of Melton Valley.
- DOE proposed an ecological enhancement approach to the remediation of the K-1007-P1 pond at the East Tennessee Technology Park. The Board did not issue a recommendation on DOE's approach. The public, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Tennessee have come out in favor of the proposed approach.
- Congress has directed EM to take over the Building 3019 Uranium-233 processing activities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and transition them from medical isotope separation to disposition. Per the Board's recommendation, DOE will hold a separate public meeting on the 3019 activities and will review the historical documents regarding the original plans for 3019 and thorium removal.
- The Board has continued to discuss changes to its bylaws to bring them in line with the EM SSAB charter, and will submit revisions to DOE Headquarters in December.

## **Northern New Mexico – J. D. Campbell**

- The Board has its last meeting of the year in late November.
- Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has provided a baseline for environmental clean-up. Although the baseline has not been validated, it is an improvement.
- DOE, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), and LANL management have encouraged the Northern New Mexico Board to provide recommendations on how to improve the current baseline, how to set priorities, and how to set schedules.
- The Board has prepared 12 recommendations ranging from public participation to groundwater monitoring. The Board intends to approve the recommendations at its next meeting in order to provide LANL adequate time for consideration, prior to its January 7, 2007 baseline change proposal deadline.
- The Board is preparing for increased public participation in FY07 and FY08, specifically with regards to the anticipated interest in the Area G closure. The Board will meet with NNSA and LANL, to discuss public participation plans
- The Board will submit any changes to its bylaws by the end of January.

## **Idaho - Dick Buxton**

- The Idaho Board will meet on November 14-15.
- The Board is faced with a large membership turn-over, and will need to consider new appointments. Due to the time commitment associated with involvement, the Board has had trouble retaining younger members; recently, three young members resigned.
- The Board needs clarification on the relationship between itself and DOE. Members are concerned about how appointments are handled and the amount of privacy afforded to applicants during the nomination process. Ms. Nielson stated that under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), advisory boards must have diversity. Although each Board approaches the process differently, DOE makes the appointments to ensure that the FACA diversity requirements are met.
- The work at the Idaho National Laboratory has continued with a focus on demolition activities. The majority of disposal has been accomplished on site.

## **Richland/Hanford – Susan Leckband**

- The Hanford Board will host a party for current Chair, Todd Martin, to celebrate his service as he completes his tenure on the Board. Susan Leckband will become the new Hanford Chair in February 2007.
- The Board is concerned about the Hanford site's draft Request for Proposals (RFP). There are likely to be three RFPs issued. Integration of the various contractors is a concern of the Board.
- The Board is in the process of revising its charter and developing its budget. The Board will submit its bylaws to DOE Headquarters in February.

- The Board provided DOE with advice on the Double Shell Tank Integrity Assessment Report. The Board is concerned that the report lacked the substance and data necessary to effectively address the situation.
- The Board has requested that risk assessments be inclusive of all Hanford sites due to the size of the complex and the number of contractors.
- The Board is excited about the recently announced remote-handled (RH) TRU waste path and has urged Hanford to transfer its RH TRU to WIPP.
- The Board provided a letter to the DOE and state regulators requiring additional characterization of the Central Plateau. The Board is encouraged by the enactment of the Central Plateau milestones, which resulted from past Board input.
- For groundwater, the \$10.5 million allocated for FY06 and FY07 is being used to implement nine different treatability tests along the river corridor. The Board is excited about the proposed technologies and happy to finally see progress on ground water issues. The Board is eager for work to continue and is hopeful for a plus-up in the budget in FY08.

#### **Nevada – Dave Hermann**

- The Nevada Board held a meeting on November 8. The Board is enjoying a group of new and enthusiastic members.
- The Board created a new committee to review the Nevada Test Site's (NTS) EM outreach material and ensure that it is relevant and accessible to the public. The committee is known as the Environmental Management Public Involvement Review Effort (EMPIRE). The Board approved a recommendation from the EMPIRE committee.
- The Transportation and Waste Committee continues to monitor DOE's efforts LLW disposition efforts at the NTS. It appears that waste levels are declining as planned.
- The Underground Test Area Committee submitted a recommendation to the full Board in early 2006 that proposed three additional monitoring wells for the NTS. The recommendation was passed on to the Board's technical working group, and a letter was approved, thanking the EM Assistant Manager at NTS for his assistance. The committee has met with UNLV technical advisors in an attempt to condense the monitoring well recommendation into an easily understandable document for the public. A final copy of the document will be available in an estimated three months, and the Board will gladly share it with the other EM SSABs.
- Planning for the March 28-30 EM SSAB Chairs' meeting has continued; the meeting will include a tour of the NTS on March 28, a full-day meeting on March 29, and a half-day meeting on March 30.
- The Board has agreed to meet on a bi-monthly basis in 2007. The December 2006 meeting will be a committee meeting.
- The Board has launched a new website, located at: [www.ntscab.com](http://www.ntscab.com)

## **Closing Remarks**

Ms. Nielson will provide the Chairs, Federal Coordinators, and Administrators with the following materials:

- The Environmental Justice Conference call for papers and conference information
- Link to registration for the Joint Intergovernmental Groups Meeting
- The Waste Disposition Plan document and WIM website
- Mr. Gilbertson's summary analysis of SSAB recommendations

The next conference call is tentatively scheduled for January 11, 2007.

Ms. Nielson thanked every one for participating.